## Discussion Questions

# Chapter 1 Public Policy and Politics

Questions for small groups or larger class discussion.

1. One-minute writing: How does public policy affect our everyday lives? What kinds of controls are in place to ensure the safety of our water? Food? Communities? What about schools—what controls are in place to ensure quality? Explore the role of government in our everyday lives.
2. One-minute writing: Name some government policies at federal, state, and local levels. How did these policies come to be? Who decides if they are needed? Who enforces them?
3. (Chapter intro) Should government get involved at all in regulating amusement park rides? Provide arguments for and arguments against.
4. How much government intrusion into daily life is acceptable? Consider the examples of security cameras and airport searches by the TSA. Is the reduction in personal freedom worth the benefits that these policies provide to society? Do other nations view the tradeoffs in a similar way? Explain.
5. Can citizens (like you) affect policy decisions? What are some ways that citizens can participate in the formation and implementation of public policy?
6. Exploring policy contexts:
   1. Use the **cultural context** in which policy making occurs to discuss trends in state policies regarding the legalization of marijuana and same-sex marriage.
   2. **Economic context.** There is more public support now (compared to 5–10 years ago) for increasing the minimum wage. How does the economic context explain this situation?
   3. **Political context:** Recent years have seen a decline in the public’s trust in government and policy making. In addition, polarization among the parties has sharpened. How do these trends affect the ability of our government to make good policy?
   4. **Social context:** The Baby Boom generation is reaching retirement age. Explain whether government policies concerning health care will be an increasing or decreasing focus in light of the population trends.
7. Explain the moral/ethical reasons for government to get involved in making policy. Discuss whether government is morally obligated to address climate change.
8. One-minute writing: After discussing the reasons that government becomes involved in making policy, come up with an example of a political, moral/ethical, or economic reason that government has taken action with regard to a current event or issue.
9. Recent years reflect a general trend among state governments to reduce support for public higher education. Discuss the economic, political, and moral reasons behind a state government’s decision to do this. Is public education a private or public good?